



The Toni Times

From the Desk of Councilmember Toni Atkins



July 2002

COMMUNITY ALERT!! HOUSING DAY SET FOR AUG. 6

Council To Hold Full-Day Hearing;
Planning Commission Weighs In On Aug. 1

As housing prices in San Diego continue to rise each month--with the median home sales price reaching an all-time high of \$323,000 just this week--the City Council will confront the issue of the ongoing housing crisis with a full-day council hearing on Tuesday, August 6. The meeting, slated to begin at 10:00am, will be held in Golden Hall, adjacent to the City Administration Building at 202 C Street.

The Council will consider two proposals which Councilmember Inzunza and I have initiated: declaring a Housing State of Emergency in San Diego, and creating a funding plan to generate tens of millions of dollars for affordable housing. Also on the agenda will be a collection of inclusionary housing policies for consideration.

The matter of inclusionary housing will also be heard by the Planning Commission on Thursday, August 1, at 1:30pm, in the Council Chambers on the 12th floor of the City Administration Building

I encourage you to attend both meetings and consider speaking before the Planning Commission and the City Council on the need for more quality affordable housing units in San Diego for both owners and renters. Your voice will make a difference!

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DISTRICT THREE MID-YEAR REPORT

Infrastructure Improvements Given Top
Priority

The last six months have truly been productive in terms of accomplishments that benefit our older, urban neighborhoods. We've enjoyed much success, receiving Council support for major projects in our district--some of which are on my list of Top 10 Priorities. I'd like to share some of these accomplishments with you.

Infrastructure Improvements

Finding funds for infrastructure projects throughout the district continues to be one of my top priorities. This year's budget hearings allowed us to invest millions more in roadway maintenance and increase sidewalk funding both citywide and in the district.

Council District 3 has reaped the rewards of on-going infrastructure improvements. In FY 2002, we had 4.23 miles of roads resurfaced, including important stretches of University Avenue, Adams Avenue, and 26th Street. The district has also reaped the benefits of approximately 5.39 miles of slurry sealing covering 67 streets within the district, and has benefitted from the completion of sidewalk repairs at 158 locations throughout the district for a total of \$316,000. We also benefitted from the installation 607 pedestrian ramps.



Infrastructure projects, including median and streetscape improvements (left) and the recent paving of major thoroughfares like University Avenue (below), 26th Street and Adams Avenue, received major funding this year.



From a Council District 3 perspective, we were also able to secure \$200,000 extra that was to be used solely for infrastructure maintenance and improvements. With this money I was able to put \$100,000 toward the Thorn Street Median project, \$70,000 toward the conversion of our street lights from low-pressure sodium to high-pressure sodium bulbs, and an additional \$30,000 into the extremely successful 75/25 sidewalk program in District 3.

Other important infrastructure improvements for Council District 3 include funds to pay for the landscape maintenance along the I-15 corridor, construction and installation of seven new street lights in City Heights, traffic signal upgrades at First Avenue and Washington Street, and the installation of a new traffic signal at University Avenue and Van Dyke Avenue. In addition, John Jay Adams Elementary and Euclid Avenue Elementary, both in our district, were awarded Safe Routes to Schools grants to provide sidewalk and safety improvements totaling \$970,000. Under the sidewalks for school locations budget, Council District 3 had two locations on the list, Maple Street from Highland Avenue to Roseland Place and Highland from Maple to Olive streets. This allocation will provide sidewalks, where none existed in the past, to improve access to school routes for children.

Sidewalk Help On The Way

I was successful in securing \$226,000 for a pilot project within Council District 3 to study the engineering deficiencies of our sidewalks, curbs and gutters. The pilot project will include the communities of South Park, North Park and Golden Hill and will analyze deficiencies and create a prioritized list of areas and projects to be improved. This is a new approach toward addressing our older infrastructure and deferred maintenance. It is my hope that this study will give us a clear picture on what our needs are so that we can plan to make the necessary improvements.

I was able to secure increased funding for maintenance and acquisition of precious park space throughout Council District 3. By allocating \$750,000 in Proposition 12 bond funds and \$50,000 in Park and Recreation matching funds, I was able to begin the process for much needed ADA upgrades for the tot lots in Azalea Park, Old Trolley Barn Park and the Golden Hill Community Recreation Center. In addition, we were successful in acquiring an additional one-half acre of park land at the 39th Street Park in Normal Heights. Finally, in partnership with Park and Recreation staff, the City has submitted a grant application in the amount of \$545,000 to the State of California to acquire additional funding needed to complete the development of the 38th Street Canyon Park. If awarded these funds, we will be able to complete the development of much needed park land in this City Heights community.

Looking ahead, we are expected to break ground in August on the new medians on El Cajon Boulevard between I-15 and Fairmount Avenue, and will move forward with the second part of the first phase of undergrounding the utility lines along 30th Street between University Avenue and Laurel Street.

Completing Projects Sooner

I'm pleased to report that you can expect many more projects like this to start popping up around the district over the next few years. During this year's Community Development Block Grant process I opted to group together a wide variety of capital improvement projects throughout the district into one large



Major streetscape projects along University Avenue in North Park and Adams Avenue in Normal Heights will be funded as part of a Section 108 Infrastructure loan.

Section 108 Infrastructure Loan so they could all be funded now rather than later. Included in this loan is funding for the completion of major projects like the North Park Main Street Streetscape Project, which runs from Idaho Street to Granada Street along University Avenue; the El Cajon Boulevard Median Project from Texas Street to 30th Street; extensive improvements to Adams Avenue as part of the Adams Avenue Business Association's streetscape project; and the Euclid Avenue Revitalization Action Plan (RAP).

Also included in the Section 108 loan are smaller neighborhood projects such as the Azalea Park Neighborhood Identification Project, which includes streetscape and landscape improvements along Poplar Avenue; the Shirley Ann Place Sidewalk Project, which is the second phase of the beautification plan for this historic University Heights street; the Hillcrest Streetscape Project along University Avenue; the Historic Talmadge Gate Restoration Project, which will restore and rehabilitate the gates and gate lights in the existing historic gateways of the Talmadge Ornamental Gates Historic District; and the Ray Street Neighborhood Identification Project, which will help make an already vibrant arts district even more attractive to visitors.

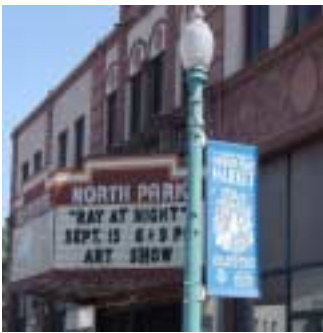
The final component of the Section 108 loan infrastructure fund earmarks a substantial amount of money for the District Three 75/25 Sidewalk Program, mid-block streetlights in both City Heights and elsewhere in the district, and streetlight conversion to white, high pressure sodium lights.

Other infrastructure projects funded as part of the District Three CDBG allocations but not included in the 108 Loan include funds for both the Park Boulevard Revitalization Project of the University Heights Community Development Corporation and the re-turfing of the Colina Park Golf Course, which although located in Council District 7, is used by a large number of District Three youth who participate in the Pro Kids Gold Academy and Learning Center.

Redevelopment Opportunities

One of my Top 10 Priorities for the district is the completion of the Metro Center Project at University Avenue and I-15. This project will bring jobs and housing assistance into the heart of City Heights. I'm pleased to report that the City Council unanimously approved the plan earlier this month. *(See full story on page 4.)*

Recently, we also witnessed the beginning of a bold new way of siting schools in our older, urban neighborhoods. The approval of the Model School Project Joint Powers Authority will spur the creation of a new elementary school, community center, affordable housing units and park space in City Heights. *(See full story on page 5.)*



The North Park Theatre and the Metro Center in City Heights are two redevelopment projects currently underway in District Three.

In April, the City Council unanimously approved the Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) between the City and Bud Fischer to develop the historic North Park Theatre. With the San Diego Comic Opera as the intended primary tenant, the theatre is scheduled to be open once again for live theater sometime in late 2004/early 2005. A multi-story parking garage is slated to service both the theatre and the surrounding business community.

Plans are moving forward with the multi-faceted, mixed-use development at 30th Street and El Cajon Boulevard at the former site of Aztec Bowl. The developers for the project, Carter/Reese Associates, envision a mix of market-rate court homes on 30th Street, affordable town homes fronting Kansas Street, a multi-story senior housing complex at 30th and El Cajon, retail space and a community center.

Additionally, the long-awaited Regional Transportation Center project broke ground in July. When construction finishes in 18-20 months, the RTC will offer a showroom for alternative fuel vehicles; an environmental education center; and a fueling station for electric, natural gas and other alternative fuel vehicles.



Plans For Balboa Park

Efforts to improve and protect Balboa Park have continued this year. In January, I was proud to accept a \$975,000 grant, obtained from the state through the efforts of Assemblymember Christine Kehoe and Governor Gray Davis. This money will be used to conduct a comprehensive traffic, parking, and circulation study for the park's core, along with a thorough update to the Balboa Park Central Mesa Precise Plan and the Inspiration Point Precise Plan. The purpose of this study is to examine closely the parking needs of the Central Mesa and determine the best location for a parking structure that will meet future needs of the park. It will also allow the public to reclaim park land that is currently used for parking in the Palisades (in front of the Aerospace Museum) and Plaza de Panama (in front of the Museum of Art) areas. In 1935, these two areas were delightful public spaces with fountains, gardens and plazas that were built for the Exposition. Removing the parking lots that currently occupy these spaces will allow for the recreation of these historic areas.

I have worked diligently with City staff to identify needs and potential sources of funding to meet many of Balboa Park's continuing deferred maintenance needs. We have aggressively pursued grant funding from Proposition 12, and will do the same when Proposition 40 park funding becomes available. So far this year I have been able to identify and earmark funding for deferred maintenance, as well as a number of specific improvements throughout the park, including the proposed West Arcades project, which will recreate the historic covered walkway between the California Tower and the Plaza de Panama using the original 1915 architectural schematics.

The Zoo continues to move forward with its Park Boulevard Promenade Project which will allow them to expand while also meeting a number of the objectives and long term needs for Balboa Park identified in the Balboa Park Master Plan and the Central Mesa Precise Plan. It will create a much more accessible link between the Zoo and the North Prado. It will also increase public open space, beautify the Park Boulevard Corridor, and create much-needed public parking that can be conveniently used by patrons of the Prado's cultural institutions as well as zoo patrons. Currently, an EIR is being prepared on the project, and is estimated for completion in the fall of this year. The Zoo continues to consider financing options for this proposal.



Parking and the Zoo expansion plans continue to be top priorities in Balboa Park.

As part of the Fiscal Year '03 budget process, I participated in a working group along with Councilmembers Peters and Madaffer that conducted an in-depth examination of the Park and Recreation Department budget. We were able to identify a number of areas in which the department could streamline its operations and improve service to the public. We also determined unequivocally that in order for the Park and Recreation Department to deliver all of the services that the public demands it must be given additional resources through the City budget process. The '03 budget begins to address this need through a 10 percent increase over '02.

Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Recap

As the Chair of the City's Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, I was able to push forward a variety of projects that serve not only District Three residents, but the city as a whole.

Since January we were able to:

- Obtain funding for a mini street sweeper to maintain bike lanes citywide;

- Help create the "Lead Safe Neighborhoods" program to reduce the incidence of lead poisoning in children;

- Pull 10 more uniformed police officers out from behind desks and back into the patrolling the streets through the Police Department's "Civilianization" of Police Personnel program;

- Approve the Azalea Park/Hollywood Park Revitalization Action Plan; and

- Support the initiation of environmental cleanups through the Brown Field Restoration Program.

METRO CENTER OFFERS JOBS, HOUSING FOR CITY HEIGHTS

COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES METRO CAREER CENTER AND VILLAS

I was pleased to help bring jobs and housing assistance to City Heights earlier this month by championing the Metro Center project before the City Council.

The Council unanimously approved the Metro Center project at University Avenue and I-15. In addition to housing the Workforce Partnership's Metro One-Stop Career Training Center, the project will include day care, community meeting space and 120 units of affordable housing for working families. This mixed-use, transit-oriented development is hailed by many as a perfect example of smart growth.

The Metro Career Center and Metro Villas project will provide dignified family housing, day care, career training, community meeting space, and other support services that will allow City Heights residents to improve their lives and livelihoods. This project is located within yards of the City Heights Transit Plaza, with premium express transit service to the downtown and UTC job centers.



The project will exceed its requirements for open space with two tot lots and landscaped common areas. It will also exceed its parking requirement with a multi-level, 485-space parking garage that will be shared by the office and housing tenants.

The project will be financed with a combination of state and local funds, including low- and moderate-income housing funds from both the City Heights and Centre City redevelopment areas.

The Metro Career Center is projected to open in the last quarter of 2003, with the Metro Villas expected to welcome its first residents in the summer of 2004. The Metro Center is being developed by the San Diego Revitalization Corporation, a special-projects subsidiary of Price Entities. The Metro Villas will be developed by two general partners, the City Heights Community Development Corporation and San Diego Interfaith Housing.

MORE PARK SPACE COMING TO NORMAL HEIGHTS

The City Council unanimously approved the acquisition of a half-acre of park space to expand the Normal Heights Community Park to 5.37 acres. The park, which is located at Adams Avenue and 39th Street, will dramatically increase the amount of open space in the Normal Heights community.

With the assistance of the City Manager's Office, we pulled together the \$500,000 needed to acquire the land from a variety of sources, including Proposition 12 park acquisition funds and the matching funds needed to secure money from the California Environmental Enhancement Program. The expanded park space represents three parcels previously owned by Caltrans and used during the construction of the I-15 freeway which runs through the heart of Mid-City.

Purchasing the I-15 Caltrans parcels at Adams Avenue, El Cajon Boulevard and University Avenue to create better neighborhood use of this land is one of my top priorities. Any time you can take a series of vacant lots and turn them into park space or redevelop them into a major community asset, you've given the neighborhood a much-needed shot in the arm. Clearly, Normal Heights needs more park space, and this Council action helps address that need.

JOINT POWERS AGENCY TO DEVELOP MODEL SCHOOL IN CITY HEIGHTS

URBAN VILLAGE PROJECT PROVIDES NEW SCHOOL, REPLACEMENT HOUSING, RECREATION AREA, OPEN SPACE, RETAIL AND FAMILY SERVICES

In an unprecedented collaboration, San Diego City Schools, the City of San Diego and its Housing Authority and Redevelopment Agency have entered into a joint exercise of powers agreement to form the San Diego Model School Development Agency, which will facilitate the planning, financing and construction of the San Diego Model School in City Heights. I was pleased to join with a unanimous City Council to approve the creation of the agency.

As currently envisioned, the San Diego Model School Development Agency will design a school that takes up less space, create an “urban village” to serve community needs, and provide replacement for housing that otherwise would have not been replaced.

The project will include a new elementary school, serving 700 students, to open in 2006; a multi-family housing development (preliminary plans offer 350 units compared to existing 245 units); open space (preliminary plans offer 9.23 acres of open space compared to existing 2.77 acres); joint-use recreation areas; pedestrian connections between housing, open space and amenities; underground parking to conserve space; family services, such as a health clinic and daycare; and retail space.

A Proposition MM elementary school will anchor the urban village and alleviate overcrowding at nearby Rosa Parks, Hamilton and Edison elementary schools. Proposition MM is the \$1.5 billion bond measure that funds the construction of 13 new schools and renovation at 165 schools.

Since January 2001, when the idea originated, there have been numerous community meetings and focus groups with the City Heights Area Planning Committee, residents and participating agencies.

This project is a win-win from every angle. It creates park space while preserving our natural canyons. In a community immensely deficient in park and open space, the value of this can't be overstated. The Model Schools Project also provides for additional housing units, many of which will be affordable to those who live there now—and gives us the quality schools we need for our children. I believe this project demonstrates how we can site new schools in the future in our older, urban communities.

Proceeds of Proposition MM will fund the district's portion of the project, but will not exceed what would be spent on a stand-alone school. In fact, the school district anticipates efficiencies and cost-savings by incorporating the school into the larger project.

UPCOMING DISTRICT THREE STREET FAIRS, PARADES, FESTIVALS AND COMMUNITY CONCERTS

San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Rally, Parade and Festival

Rally: Friday, July 26, 8:00 to 10:00pm
Organ Pavilion, Balboa Park

Parade: Saturday, July 27, from Noon to 3pm
University Avenue between Normal Street and Sixth
Avenue, then south on Sixth to Balboa Drive

Festival: Saturday and Sunday, July 27-28

Sat.: 1pm to 10pm

Sun.: 11am to 9pm

Marston Point in Balboa Park

Contact: 619/297-7683

“Playin’ In The Park” Summer Concert (Sponsored by Normal Hgts. Cultural Council)

Performing: Jim Earp, West Coast Iron Works Band,
Citizen X Posse, Super Sonic Samba School,
City Moves!, Eveoke Dance, RecCTRappers,
Normal Heights Cheerleaders

Sunday, July 28, 4:00 to 8:00pm

Adams Comm. Park, 3491 Adams Ave., Normal Hgts.

Contact: 619/283-8379

CityFest

(Presented by the Hillcrest Association)

Street Fair: Sunday, August 11, 10am to 7:00pm

In Hillcrest, on Fifth Avenue between University
Avenue and Upas Street.

Contact: 619/299-3330

*Stop by our District Three booth on the west side of
Fifth Avenue, just north of Robinson Avenue!*

North Park Community Association Summer Concerts in Bird Park

Performing: Bill Magee Blues Band, featuring North
Park residents Mike Mitchell on guitar and Jasper
Austin on harmonica.

Friday, August 30, 6:00 to 8:00pm

Bird Park, 28th St. between Upas and Redwood

Contact: birdparkconcert@aol.com; call 619/379-2327

*Arrive at 4:30pm for a tour of Balboa Park presented
by WalkAbout San Diego and Roger Newton. The tour
will return in time for the concert.*